

Appl. No. 09 976,291  
Amendment dated August 21, 2003  
Reply to Office Action of May 21, 2003

**Amendment to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claims 1-8 (canceled):

Claim 9 (currently amended): The method of claim 8 31, further comprising the step of introducing each of the at least two masses into a different one of the at least two streams.

Claim 10 (canceled):

Claim 11 (currently amended): The method of claim 40 32, wherein said evacuating step includes entraining the finer fraction in an air stream and further comprising the step of regulating the quantity of air in the air stream to establish at the other side of the at least one belt a constant subatmospheric pressure.

Claim 12 (currently amended): The method of claim 40 32, wherein the belt is arranged to move in a predetermined direction and the at least some second material is directed against the one side of the belt upstream of delivery of first material, as seen in said predetermined direction.

Claims 13-30 (canceled).

Claim 31 (new): A method of simultaneously building at least two stream of smokable material from a mixture containing randomly distributed relatively large first particulate material and randomly distributed relatively small second particulate material including a coarser fraction and a

finer fraction, comprising the steps of:

advancing the mixture against one side of at least one moving belt forming part of a pneumatic conveyor and having a permeability such that the belt entrains the first material but permits at least some of the second material to pass therethrough;

thereupon at least partially segregating the coarser and the finer fractions of the at least some second material from each other;

admitting at least some of the segregated coarser fraction into the entrained first material;

breaking up the mixture into at least two flows, and wherein said advancing step includes simultaneously advancing each of the at least two flows against one side of one of at least two discrete moving belts; and

dividing the at least some second material which has passed through the at least two belts into at least two masses prior to said segregating step.

Claim 32 (new): A method of building at least one stream of smokable material from a mixture containing randomly distributed relatively large first particulate material and randomly distributed relatively small second particulate material including a coarser fraction and a finer fraction, comprising the steps of:

advancing the mixture against one side of at least one moving belt forming part of a pneumatic conveyor and having a permeability such that the belt entrains the first material but permits at least some of the second material to pass therethrough;

thereupon at least partially segregating the coarser and the finer fractions of the at least some second material from each other; and

admitting at least some of the segregated coarser fraction into the entrained first material,

wherein said advancing step includes advancing the mixture against a relatively large first portion of the one side of the at least one belt and said segregating step includes directing the at least

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some second material against a relatively small second portion of the one side of the at least one belt so that the finer fraction passes through the at least one belt and the coarser fraction moves with the at least one belt, and evacuating the finer fraction at a side opposite the one side of the at least one belt.